

Fear-Avoidance Beliefs Questionnaire (FABQ)

The FABQ is a self-report questionnaire used to identify and quantify fear-avoidance beliefs, mainly in people with low back pain or musculoskeletal pain. It explores the belief that physical activity and work could worsen pain or injury, which promotes avoidance, functional limitation, disability, and sometimes the persistence of chronic pain. The tool is particularly useful in pain psychology, rehabilitation, and the assessment of psychosocial risk factors known as “yellow flags,” especially for estimating the risk of chronicity, disability, and difficulties returning to work.

Number of questions	16 questions
Estimated duration	5 minutes
Language	English
Original name	Fear-Avoidance Beliefs Questionnaire
Target audience	Adults with low back pain
Authors	Gordon Waddell, M. Newton, I. Henderson, D. Somerville, C. J. Main (1993)

Preview of the 16 questions

My pain was caused by physical activity

0 - Completely disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 - Unsure | 4 | 5 | 6 - Completely agree

Physical activity makes my pain worse

0 - Completely disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 - Unsure | 4 | 5 | 6 - Completely agree

Physical activity might harm my back

0 - Completely disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 - Unsure | 4 | 5 | 6 - Completely agree

I should not do physical activities which (might) make my pain worse

0 - Completely disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 - Unsure | 4 | 5 | 6 - Completely agree

I cannot do physical activities which (might) make my pain worse

0 - Completely disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 - Unsure | 4 | 5 | 6 - Completely agree

Administer your questionnaires online

Send your patient a link: they answer from their phone or computer, and you receive the scored results by email.

View the questionnaire on mentaal.org ›

Scoring & interpretation

Each item is scored from 0 to 6, from “completely disagree” to “completely agree.” Standard scoring mainly relies on two subscales: physical activity (items 2, 3, 4, and 5; score 0 to 24) and work (items 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15; score 0 to 42). Items 1, 8, 13, 14, and 16 are not included in the standard score. Higher scores reflect stronger avoidance beliefs, associated with an increased risk of disability, functional limitation, and difficulties resuming activity or work.

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Romane L. - Online CBT Psychologist